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John Logan

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Staying Awake · John Logan

*But we are old, our fields are running wild;
Till Christ again turn wanderer and child—
Robert Lowell*

You see I did not want to leave
so I kept the young couple up.
It was the reverse of the scene where Robert Lowell
read at St. John's College the year I turned twenty-eight.
I wanted to follow him wherever he would go.
I knew he was headed off to Iowa to teach,
but I had a wife and three kids.
(While she did dishes I bathed kids and put them to bed.
I loved their infantile white flesh and their tousled heads.)
I was teaching. I was not free to go, but I held
LORD WEARY'S CASTLE in my hand
as I passed by from class to class,
and the evening Lowell read I got high on rhyme
and his fierce family vision,
oracles that move through his verse.
I knew he was the master then,
and I wanted to apprentice myself under him.
Well, they say that I'm a master now, but on this night
when I was reading Lowell's poems with a pupil
it grew late: I still wanted to take what the student
had to share. I am sixty and am tired of giving.
So I overstayed and kept the couple up, I said,
away from their conjugal bed.

For Tom Lucas